

Amendments to Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for facilitating the redemption of amounts accumulated in a rewards account through an online auction comprising the steps of:
selecting an auction system from a plurality of auction systems, wherein each auction system manages a plurality of auctions;
registering, by an auction middleware application, a rewards account with the auction system,
wherein the auction middleware application is adapted to interact with a plurality of account managers offering a plurality of rewards programs,
wherein the rewards account is managed by one of the plurality of account managers, and
wherein the auction middleware application acts as an interface between the plurality of account managers and the plurality of auction systems;
receiving bidding, by the computer based system, [[an]] a first bid amount contained within the rewards account on [[an]] a first auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the first bid is associated with a rewards account, wherein the rewards account has a rewards account balance, wherein the rewards account was registered with the auction system, and wherein the auction system manages a plurality of auctions;
confirming, by the computer based system, the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the first bid;
allocating, by the computer based system, a first portion of the rewards account balance to the first bid;
reserving to a pending status, by the computer based system, the first portion of the rewards account balance such that the first portion is unavailable in the rewards account balance;
monitoring, by the computer based system, the first bid;
determining, by the computer based system, if the first bid is accepted;
releasing from the pending status, by the computer based system, the first portion of the rewards account balance, in response to the first bid not being accepted;
receiving, by the computer based system, a second bid on a second auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the second bid is associated with the rewards account;

determining, by the computer based system, if the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the second bid;

placing, by the computer based system, the second bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being sufficient; and

requesting, by the computer a new bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being insufficient.

~~determining a winning bid amount on the auction item to identify a winning auction bid by:~~

~~terminating the ability to post bids to an auction item;~~

~~determining a winning bid for the auction item by querying the auction system for a highest amount bid for the auction item and an identity of the participant bidding the highest amount; and~~

~~verifying that the participant with the winning bid has an account balance to cover the winning bid, wherein when the account balance of the participant does not cover the winning bid:~~

~~a) querying the auction system for the next highest bid amount;~~

~~b) verifying that the next highest bid exceeds any minimum bid amount set for the auction item;~~

~~c) verifying that the participant of the next highest bid has an account balance to cover the next highest bid; and~~

~~d) repeating steps a) - c) until a participant has an account balance to cover the next highest bid; and~~

~~completing a financial transaction for the winning auction bid.~~

2-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 ~~2~~ ~~wherein transmitting an~~ participant's account information to an auction further comprising ~~comprises the steps of:~~

querying, by the computer based system, the auction system to verify that the auction system accepts the rewards account for payment during participation in the auction;

querying a management system for the account to validate the participant's identity;
and

transmitting, by the computer based system, the account data of the participant to an
to the auction system-database.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising ~~wherein the step of bidding an~~
~~amount contained within the rewards account comprises the steps of:~~

presenting, by the computer based system, a rewards participant with a webpage of an auction site having one or more ongoing auctions for selection by the participant;

receiving presenting, by the computer based system, a selection for at least one of a first auction item and a second auction item; information to the participant relating to at least one of an auction and auction item selected by the participant;

receiving, by the computer based system, allowing the participant to enter and submit an amount of rewards from the rewards participant's account to bid on at least one of the first auction item and the second auction item; and

transmitting, by the computer based system, the participant's bid amount to post at least one of the first bid and the second bid to a bid on the auction site.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6 further comprising at least one of the following steps:

verifying a balance in the rewards account;

querying, by the computer based system, the auction system to verify that the first bid the participant's bid exceeds the amount of any previous bid for the first auction item;

querying, by the computer based system, the auction system to verify that the first bid the participant's bid exceeds any minimum bid amount set for at the first auction item; and

transmitting posting, by the computer based system, the first bid participant's bid amount on to the auction system site.

8-11. (Canceled).

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising wherein the step of completing a financial transaction for the winning bid comprises the steps of:

debiting, by the computer based system,[[the]] a winning bid amount from the rewards account of the participant having the winning auction bid; and

transmitting, by the computer based system, a credit crediting based on the winning bid amount to a merchant who sold the auction item an account owned by an account manager who manages rewards accounts; and,

settling with a merchant who sold the auction item.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising providing reward account details and account history data, wherein[[said]] the account history data may includes at least one of dates and descriptions of items the participant has bid on, the cash rewards amount bid during each auction, winning bid amounts, and current bid status.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising at least one of adding and removing participating rewards accounts.

15-16. (Cancelled)

17. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the rewards account is associated with a transaction account.

18. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the rewards account has a point value which is converted to a monetary value in response to registering the rewards account with the auction system.

19. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the rewards account has a point value which is converted to a monetary value in response to registering the rewards account with the auction system, wherein the auction system is a third party system operated independently from the computer based system.

20. (New) The method of claim 12, wherein the credit is a monetary value transmitted to the merchant.

21. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the auction system is operated independently from the computer based system.

22. (New) A tangible computer-readable storage medium having non-transitory computer-executable instructions stored thereon that, if executed by a computer based system for managing on line auctions, cause the computer based system to perform operations comprising:

receiving, by the computer based system, a first bid on a first auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the first bid is associated with a rewards account, wherein the rewards account has a rewards account balance, wherein the rewards account was registered with the auction system, and wherein the auction system manages a plurality of auctions;

confirming, by the computer based system, the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the first bid;

allocating, by the computer based system, a first portion of the rewards account balance to the first bid;

reserving to a pending status, by the computer based system, the first portion of the rewards account balance such that the first portion is unavailable in the rewards account balance;

monitoring, by the computer based system, the first bid;

determining, by the computer based system, if the first bid is accepted;

releasing from the pending status, by the computer based system, the first portion of the rewards account balance, in response to the first bid not being accepted;

receiving, by the computer based system, a second bid on a second auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the second bid is associated with the rewards account;

determining, by the computer based system, if the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the second bid;

placing, by the computer based system, the second bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being sufficient; and

requesting, by the computer a new bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being insufficient.

23. (New) A system comprising:

a network interface communicating with a memory;

the memory communicating with a processor; and

the processor, when executing a computer program, is configured to:

receive a first bid on a first auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the first bid is associated with a rewards account, wherein the rewards account has a rewards account balance, wherein the rewards account was registered with the auction system, and wherein the auction system manages a plurality of auctions;

confirm the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the first bid;

allocate a first portion of the rewards account balance to the first bid;

reserve to a pending status, the first portion of the rewards account balance such that the first portion is unavailable in the rewards account balance;

monitor the first bid;

determine if the first bid is accepted;

release from the pending status, the first portion of the rewards account balance, in response to the first bid not being accepted;

receive a second bid on a second auction item being auctioned within the auction system, wherein the second bid is associated with the rewards account;

determine if the rewards account balance is sufficient to cover the second bid;

place the second bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being sufficient; and

request a new bid for the second auction item, in response to the rewards account balance being insufficient.